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Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

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Editorial

Resist the US aggression in Iraq

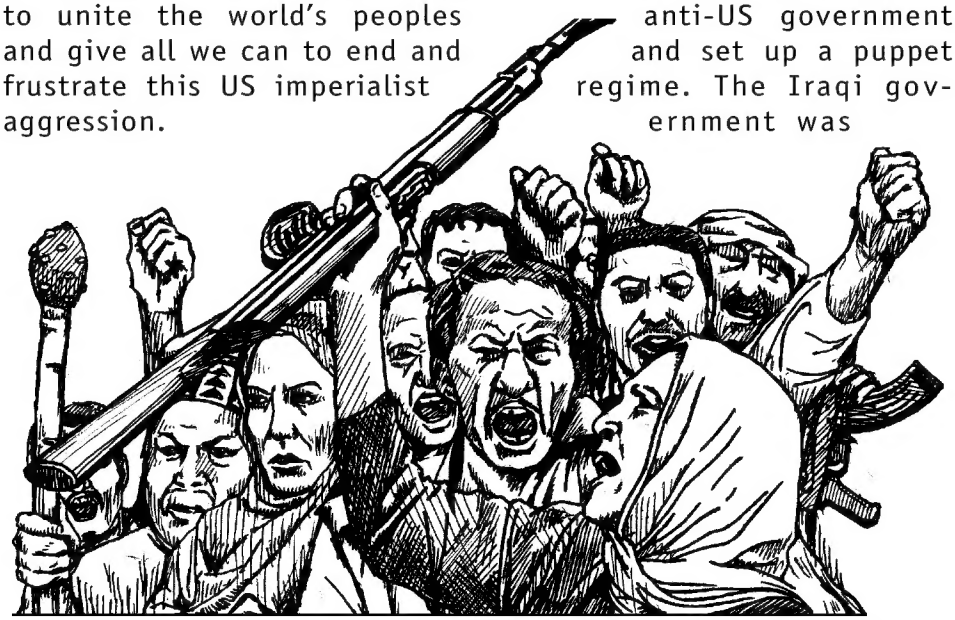
The world's peoples must use all means to thwart the US' unjust war

The Communist Party of the Philippines strongly condemns the US government's armed agression in Iraq. In unilaterally and arrogantly waging this war, the US has directly trampled on the sovereignty of Iraq and the freedom of the Iraqi people.

It is a violation of the principles of equal rights, the sovereignty and independence of countries, mutual non-aggression and mutual non-interference in the internal affairs of countries.

It is correct and necessary to unite the world's peoples and give all we can to end and frustrate this US imperialist aggression.

US President George W. Bush had arrogantly imposed a 48-hour ultimatum on March 18 for the Iraqi government to surrender and used this as a means towards waging war. The US' objective in attacking Iraq is to overthrow the anti-US government and set up a puppet regime. The Iraqi government was right to have condemned the ultimatum. It gave its own ultimatum for Bush to resign for waging an unjust war and for now being gravely isolated worldwide.



Bombs have been raining in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad for two days. Simultaneously, American soldiers, along with their tanks, have attacked towns in the country's southern portion.

The Iraqi people and government have been much angered, especially with the bombing of civilians' homes and buildings in Baghdad. The Iraqi people and soldiers now stand ready to defend their country. They are consolidating their ranks and awaiting the entry of American troops deep into the country to fight them both through regular and irregular warfare. The people, both armed and unarmed, are ready to launch a patriotic war.

The US has arrogantly shunted aside the opposition of the broad masses of the world's peoples, the majority of countries and even most of the US' allies. It took great pains to maneuver, scheme and concoct

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all kinds of rationalizations to obtain support for its war on Iraq. In the end, with the certain failure of the resolution it has been trying to pass in the United Nations, the US preempted, insulted and rendered the international forum inutile.

Such wanton disregard for international and diplomatic processes shows that the US has no intention of submitting to the vast majority of countries worldwide. It has demonstrated that the only decisive factor is its military superiority as the world's sole imperialist power. It has shown its capability to violate the basic principles of civilized relations among countries and trample on the sovereignty and independence of any country.

The US is now playing the heinous role that fascist Germany, Japan and Italy played in the Second World War. US imperialism is now reaping the unprecedented hatred of peoples and various countries worldwide.

The US' intense unilateralism and desire for war is driven by the avaricious desire to change the division of the world among imperialist countries, extend its hegemony to Iraq, set up a puppet regime in this country, obtain control of Iraq's oil as well as over most oil supplies in the Middle East and the entire world. It is driven by US imperialism's desperation in the face of a very intense economic crisis.

The CPP salutes the militancy and steadfastness demonstrated by the Iraqi people to defend their national sovereignty and oppose the dictates of the US imperialist superpower.

Iraq has every right to resist, eradicate and defeat attacking foreign armed forces and thwart attempts to establish US imperialist power in that country.

The CPP salutes the militancy and steadfastness demonstrated by the Iraqi people to defend their national sovereignty and oppose the dictates of the US imperialist superpower. The Iraqi people have no recourse but to launch a patriotic war against US aggression.

In the face of the US' imperialist war on Iraq, the revolutionary forces and peoples the world over must launch all possible means and forms of struggle to resist and overthrow US imperialism.

Filipino revolutionaries and the Filipino people and all revolutionaries and peoples of the world must stand in solidarity with the Iraqi people's resistance to US armed aggression. With the US having trampled on the sovereignty and independence of Iraq, the threat of US aggression in the Philippines has grown. It is part of our internationalist duty to resist and frustrate US aggression in our country. Using all possible means, we must condemn and resist the Macapagal-Arroyo regime's blind support for its imperialist master. Governments supporting the US war of aggression on Iraq must be overthrown.

Revolutionary forces and the people in the US and in other warmonger and fascist cohorts of the US must launch all possible forms of struggle—legal and illegal, armed and unarmed—to thwart aggression against Iraq and deal blows on the imperialist governments of George W. Bush of the US, Tony Blair of the UK, José María Aznar of Spain and John Howard of Australia.

It is absolutely correct to call on the people in these imperialist countries to transform the imperialist war into civil wars against their respective warmonger governments. AB

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The ogre has attacked

In attacking Iraq, the US has shown the world, with overweening arrogance, that it cares for nothing but its selfish imperialist interests

US imperialism began on March 20 the cowardly and wanton bombing of Iraq. In response, Iraq likewise bombed American forces along the Kuwaiti border. This belies claims being propagated by the US that a huge portion of Iraq's military forces was ready to surrender and fight the Saddam Hussein regime.

This was followed up by even more intense bombardment directed at the homes of Saddam Hussein and his daughters. American forces have also attacked the southern portion of the country and occupied some towns along Iraq's border with Kuwait.

The US would like to make it appear that this is but a prelude to even bigger attacks. Nonetheless, a few days before, two B-1 airplanes bombed southern Baghdad. American troops had also sneaked into the "demilitarized zone" nearest the border with Kuwait.

Despite US arrogance about its high tech and more powerful weapons, it expects to occupy Iraq if Iraqi soldiers voluntarily surrender. Simultaneous with an incessant campaign to terrorize the Iraqi people, the US has also been continuously spreading various kinds of disinformation, lies and sophistry. The US dropped at least 17 million propaganda leaflets in Iraq.

China and Russia immediately called for a stop to the bombing. They called the war of aggression illegitimate and unwarranted and a violation of UN policies and other international laws. Russia said that it was a grave error and ill-conceived.

On the other hand, France and Germany showed spinelessness in the face of US coercion. From their formerly strong opposition to aggression, they have seen fit to merely prepare for the huge number of casualties among Iraqi civilians. Worse, Germany said it would not stop US warplanes from using its airspace.

The UN has likewise emerged inutile in the face of the US' wanton violation of all of the forum's diplomatic and political processes.

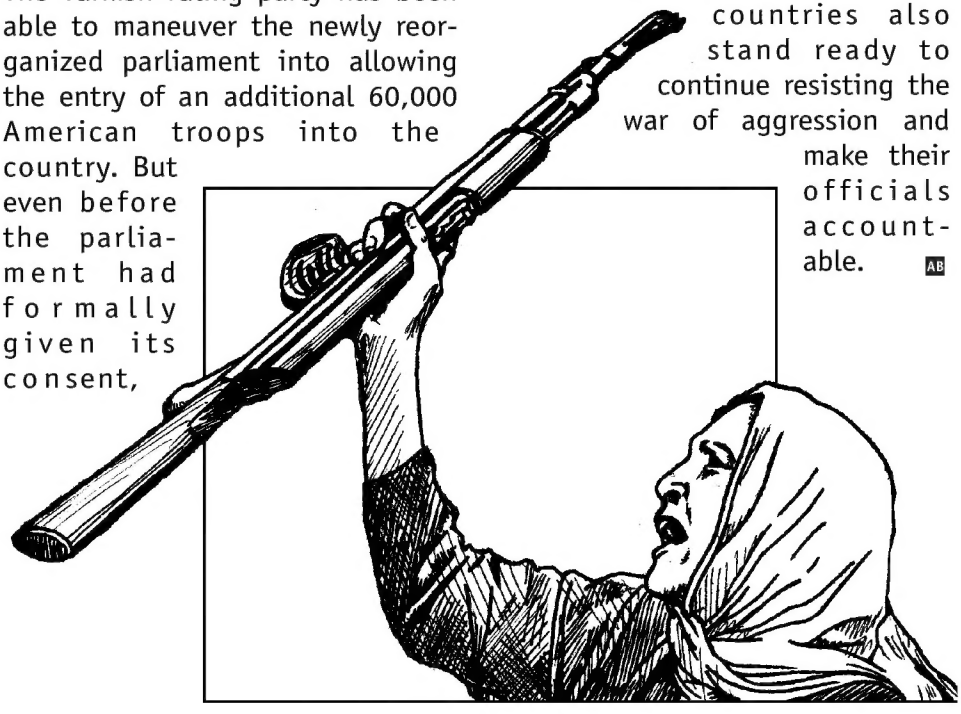
As expected, the Philippines and South Korea, both US semi-colonies, scrambled to extend support. Japan likewise sided with the US.

Turkey has also allowed the US to use its airspace for the attack. The Turkish ruling party has been able to maneuver the newly reorganized parliament into allowing the entry of an additional 60,000 American troops into the country. But even before the parliament had formally given its consent, the US continued smuggling in its forces and equipment to northern Iraq using Turkey's ports and facilities.

On the eve of the attack, the US was able to rely only on the UK and Spain, its most rabid allies. But even these countries confront intense opposition and strikes.

In the UK, some prominent members of Tony Blair's government resigned in succession after he declared his unconditional support for the US war. He has been repudiated by his own partymates and was able to muster parliament's approval only through the votes of the rival party. Many members of his party have been calling for his resignation.

It is the US, UK and Spain that have seen the biggest demonstrations and the broadest mass movements against the war of aggression on Iraq. The people in these countries also stand ready to continue resisting the war of aggression and make their officials accountable. AB



Filipino people opposed to war

Vehement opposition to US war in Iraq echoes through Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao

Despite strong condemnation for the newly commenced war on Iraq from so many of the world's countries, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has brazenly declared that her government was part of the "coalition of the willing" that openly supports the conflict.

Macapagal-Arroyo has also exploited the start of the war, which she has eagerly anticipated, to use it as a pretext for plans to use "emergency powers" and rush the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Bill.

Even before the war started, Macapagal-Arroyo had already showed her puppetry to her master, the world's number one terrorist. Peaceful demonstrations against the US war on Iraq were violently dispersed in succession. On the afternoon of March 20, policemen mercilessly truncheoned, water cannoned and arrested members of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), Pamalakaya, Anakbayan, Anakpawis and KMU. Although 12 of them were injured, the demonstrators returned in bigger numbers to the US embassy, among them bishops, priests and nuns who were members of Promotion of Church People's Response, the Justice Not War Coalition, Bayan Muna, the Moro-Christian Peoples Alliance, Migrante and Gabriela.

Earlier, on March 18, up to 11 demonstrators, including a 10-year-old boy, were injured when their rally was dispersed, also in front of the US embassy. The injured sustained foot and leg fractures and serious head wounds. Members of the pro-US and anti-communist Discovery Crusade of the Philippines also beat up and shot at a group of anti-war rallyists.

Meanwhile, the Women Working for Peace coalition published an advertisement in the Philippine Daily Inquirer on March 20 against the US war in Iraq. Aside from the 31 women who convened the coalition, the advertisement was signed by more than 160 nuns, women legislators and local officials, actresses, women in media and other prominent women leaders as well as 17 women's organizations, students and faculty of 17 schools and thousands of others. The coalition expressed concern for the fate of 1.4 million Filipinos in the Middle East, 65% of whom are women domestic helpers. It said that women and children become more vulnerable to rape and sexual abuse during war. Wartime rape, the coalition added, is a mode of torture and subjugation.

In the first hours of the US attack on Baghdad and other parts of Iraq, Filipinos stood in solidarity with protests in 126 other countries worldwide. Aside from Metro Manila, protest actions burst out in Baguio City and in Rizal, Quezon, Cavite, Laguna and Occidental Mindoro. Panay and Guimaras were paralyzed by a strike against oil price hikes and the US attack on Iraq. Mass actions were also held in the cities of Bacolod, Cebu, Davao, Cagayan de Oro and Zamboanga.

Senators and congressmen who were members of the Legislators Against War (LAW) assailed the unilateral US war.

The Justice Not War Coalition announced that large protest actions would be held starting March 22. AB

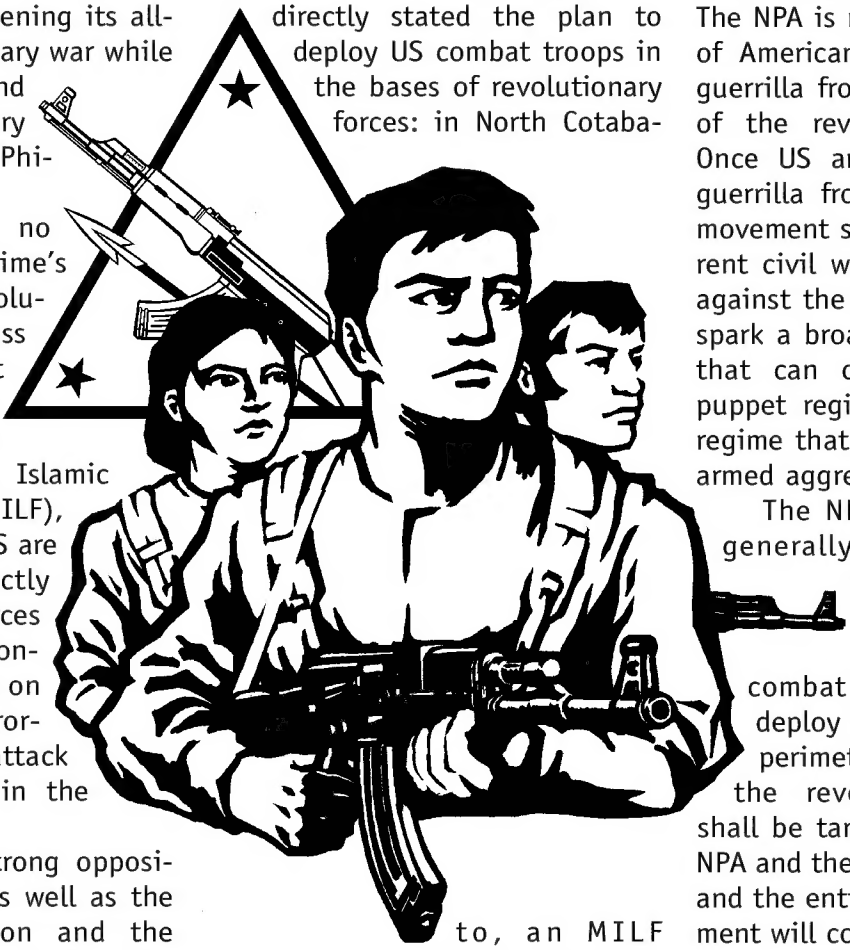
Response to US armed intervention

On its 34th anniversary, the NPA is fully prepared to further advance people's war

The advancement of the people's war is the principal task of the NPA and the entire revolutionary movement. There is greater need to hold firm to this task in the face of the intensifying national and international crisis of the ruling reactionary system. Imperialist and reactionary rule has grown more corrupt and more vicious and the revolutionary forces and people's struggle for democracy, national liberation, justice and peace has grown stronger.

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime's days are numbered. Desperate to save itself, it is worsening its all-out counterrevolutionary war while further broadening and deepening US military intervention in the Philippines.

There has been no letup in the regime's attacks on the revolutionary forces and mass base. But since it doesn't stand a chance against the NPA and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the regime and the US are conspiring to directly deploy American forces against the revolutionary forces. They insist on the "war against terrorism" as a pretext to attack revolutionary forces in the Philippines.



In the face of strong opposition by the people as well as the reactionary opposition and the exposé of the regime's lies, the Bush-Macapagal-Arroyo cabal has run out of acceptable rationalizations for direct US aggression in the country. It hatched a spate of bombings in Davao City and other parts of Mindanao, putting the blame directly on the MILF and indirectly on the NPA. They have abandoned their supposed pursuit of the Abu Sayyaf and have directly stated the plan to deploy US combat troops in the bases of revolutionary forces: in North Cotabato, an MILF base; and in Occidental Mindoro, Quezon and Compostela Valley, bases of the NPA.

To clear the way for such a plan, the regime, under US urging, has scuttled the peace negotiation with the NDFP and the MILF. In its place, the Bush-Macapagal-Arroyo cabal is stressing the military approach which will be principally dependent on US aggression to try to quell the revolutionary movement. To justify this, the US and the puppet regime are asserting the "terrorist" tag on the Communist Party of the Philippines, the NPA and Comrade Jose Ma. Sison. The regime has also declared the MILF "terrorist."

The revolutionary forces are not intimidated by the threat from the regime and US imperialism. The NPA is not daunted by threats of American troop incursion into guerrilla fronts and the territories of the revolutionary movement. Once US armed forces step into guerrilla fronts, the revolutionary movement shall transform the current civil war into a national war against the US. US aggression will spark a broad patriotic opposition that can overthrow the current puppet regime or any succeeding regime that would support foreign armed aggression.

The NPA shall maintain its generally defensive stance in the current stage of the people's war. Nonetheless, any US combat force that would deploy within or along the perimeter of the territories of the revolutionary movement shall be targets of attacks by the NPA and the people. The Party, NPA and the entire revolutionary movement will continue to give their all to thwart foreign aggression and expel foreign troops from the Philippines.

The Party and the entire revolutionary movement are now putting emphasis on broadening their reach and mobilization of the people; isolating and overthrowing

Continued on "Response...," page 6

98 firearms seized in Surigao raid

RED FIGHTERS seized 98 firearms in a successful raid on the armory of Picop Resources Inc., in Barangay Tabon, Bislig, Surigao del Sur on March 21.

The two guards watching over the armory were caught flatfooted when the NPA entered the place where the Mission Security Agency and the CAFGU kept their weapons. The CAFGU also serves as a security force of PICOP.

Seized during the raid were 47 M14s, 27 Garands, 17 carbines, an M16, two .38s, four shotguns and a two-way radio.

PICOP is one of the biggest paper manufacturers in the Philippines and also one of the biggest in Asia. It has a long record of suppressing its workers and the peasants living around the company area.

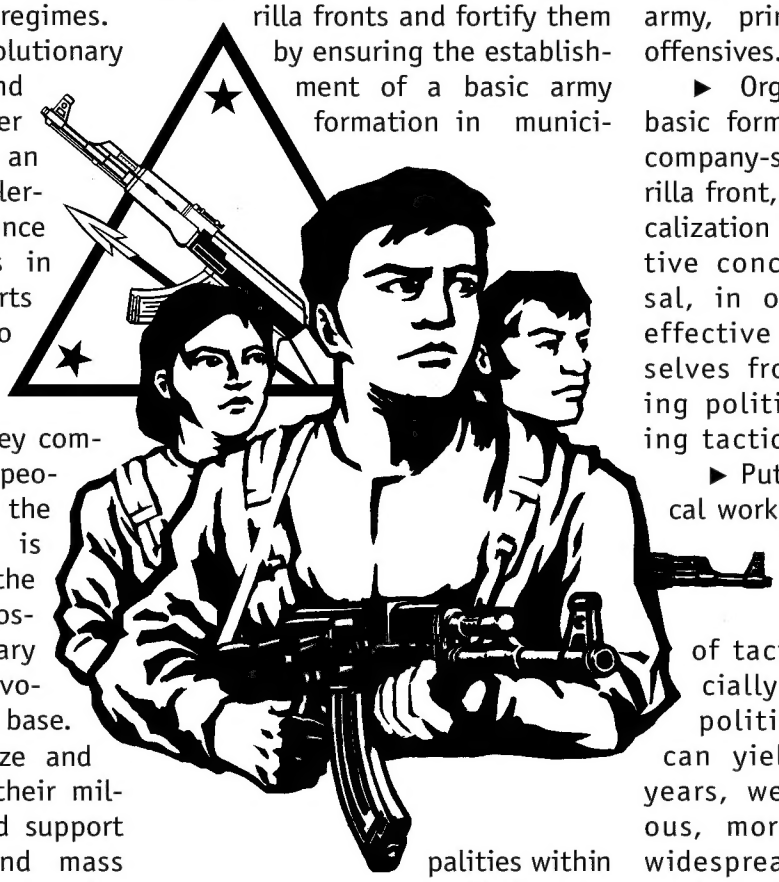
"Response...,"from page 5

the out-and-out puppet, repressive and rotten US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime; and resisting escalating US military intervention. They will confront and resist other succeeding puppet regimes.

The Party and the revolutionary forces are prepared and well-deployed to further grow in strength and in an all-rounded way, to accelerate the pace of their advance and make great strides in their revolutionary efforts this year and the years to come.

Particular attention is being given to some key components in preparing the people's army and advancing the armed struggle. This is preparation as well for the increasingly imminent possibility of US military aggression against the revolutionary forces and mass base.

▶ Arouse, organize and mobilize the people in their millions to take part in and support the armed struggle and mass movement. Build numerous revolutionary mass organizations, militias and Party branches in clusters of barrios, eventually covering the majority of villages and towns. Further invigorate antifeudal struggles and other mass actions. Broaden and strengthen the united front. Build closer links and coordination between the urban and rural mass movements.



▶ Further broaden, link together and strengthen the guerrilla fronts and fortify them by ensuring the establishment of a basic army formation in municipalities within guerrilla fronts.

▶ Stimulate NPA recruitment from the broad mass base in the countryside in accordance with standards and guidelines, as well as personnel, material and political support from the urban areas.

▶ Raise the politico-military capabilities of officers and fighters to hone their political keenness, leadership and fighting ability.

▶ Strive to sufficiently arm the growing ranks of the people's army, primarily through tactical offensives.

▶ Organize the platoon-size basic formations of the NPA, the company-size force in every guerrilla front, the proportionate verticalization and the system of relative concentration and dispersal, in order to become more effective in defending themselves from the enemy, fulfilling political tasks and launching tactical offensives.

▶ Put in order various political work among the ranks of the reactionary armed forces.

▶ Resolutely invigorate the launching of tactical offensives, especially those that have great political significance and can yield arms. In the next years, we expect more numerous, more frequent and more widespread tactical offensives against AFP and PNP units and paramilitary forces that attack the revolutionary movement as well as against those who have grave crimes against the revolutionary movement and the people. AB

9 firearms seized in Agusan raid

THE NEW People's Army's daring raid on the police headquarters and municipal hall in Carmen, Agusan del Norte on the night of March 16 took a mere 15 minutes.

The three policemen and Mayor Ramon Calo's bodyguard were caught by surprise when they were strafed by guerrillas aboard two trucks. They engaged the Red fighters in a firefight but were easily subdued by the combined forces of the Julito Tiro and Cesar Cayan Commands of the NPA in North Central Mindanao.

Seized during the raid were eight M16s, an M79, 500 rounds of ammunition, 40 M16 magazines and a base radio.

Military troops came to the rescue but were unable to intercept the guerrillas. The mayor's bodyguard was killed in the firefight. Two others were wounded.

NPA raids PNP headquarters, ambushes Philippine Army convoy

THE NPA successfully raided police forces in a municipality and ambushed two Philippine Army teams on March 8. Sixteen firearms were seized and four soldiers, including a lieutenant were killed and four wounded in the three tactical offensives.

Samar. Two teams of the Jovito Ragay Command of the NPA in Samar simultaneously raided the town of Calbiga. The first team raided the Calbiga PNP headquarters, where the policemen were unable to put up a fight due to the swiftness of the attack. The second team raided houses of rabid counterrevolutionaries and bad elements.

The Red fighters seized six M16s, a shotgun, a .38 and two 9 mm pistols. The severely shamed enemy leadership ordered the relief of the Calbiga PNP chief.

Bohol. NPA guerrillas ambushed a Philippine Army convoy on its way back from a patrol at around noon, in Mabini town. The soldiers of the 15th IB were aboard a Kennedy-type jeep and a mini-cruiser when they were ambushed in Sitio Bugtong, Barangay San Isidro.

Four soldiers were killed in the firefight, including 15th IB intelligence officer 1Lt. Ronie Bungaos. Two other troopers were wounded.

Albay. The NPA ambushed troops of the 22nd IB at around 8:30 a.m. in Barangay Tupas, Ligao City. "B" Coy commander 2Lt. Rogel Hegana and a sergeant were wounded.

All-out war a failure in Panay

NPA wipes out SOT command in Panay island

It was 5:30 p.m. of February 24, 2003 when an NPA unit ambushed a squad of the Special Operations Team (SOT) under Task Force Panay along the Sibagwan creek in Barangay Daan Sur, Tapaz, Capiz. Killed in the firefight were Capt. Francisco Fonteveros, SOT commander in Panay, four other soldiers and their CAFGU guide. One other soldier was wounded. The NPA unit seized five M16 rifles, an M14, several rounds of ammunition and a two-way radio. The fighting lasted about 45 minutes.

Martyred during the firefight was Comrade Ismaelito "Ka Bob" Giganto, the NPA commander of the Central Front.

This victory belies the 3rd ID-led Task Force Panay's (TFP) earlier declaration that it had eradicated the NPA in Tapaz. They had boasted that the SOT was set to transfer control over the town to the infantry and CAFGU forces.

Under the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime's all-out war policy, the TFP had been concentrating on the Central Panay guerrilla front for almost two years (up to the end of 2002). The Central Front is one of the 3rd ID's priority areas in its bid to crush the NPA. Since July 2001, the TFP has concentrated ever bigger forces on the Central Front. In October 2002, up to two-thirds of the entire mili-

tary force in Panay was deployed in about three towns along the Capiz-Iloilo-Aklan tri-boundary. Among the military forces deployed were the 12th IB, the Provisional Infantry Battalion (PIB), the SOT, CAFGU forces and the Philippine Army Engineering Battalion.

Their area of concentration comprised the ancestral lands of the Tumanduk tribe, a national minority group in Panay. The Tumanduk tribespeople strongly support the revolutionary movement because of the latter's assistance in their struggle against the seizure of their land. The martyred Ka Bob was in fact a valiant Red commander from the ranks of the Tumanduk tribe.

The first SOT batch directly under the 3rd ID's command was deployed in November-December 2001 to the intermediate portion of Tapaz, in eight adjacent barrios. It launched combat and psywar operations to coerce the people into joining the CAFGU and the Barrio Intelligence Network (BIN). In July 2002, the third SOT batch, which was under the TFP's command, was deployed to the mountainous barangays (the second batch had been deployed to Bohol instead). Meanwhile, the 12th IB was stationed in villages surrounding the SOT-saturated areas to serve as their security force.

But after close to two years, the TFP had failed in its objective of recruiting CAFGU and BIN elements in each barrio. Instead, it reached less than half of its target, and recruited bad elements who have long been despised by the masses in the area.

The reactionary military committed grave abuses against the people during their long stint in the area. Their marauding activities included, among others, forcibly concentrating people in the barrio centers and imposing curfews, destroying crops, arresting and terrorizing persons suspected of being active in the movement, and attempted rape. They shot Dante Parle, a youth suspected of being an NPA member. This was but part of a string of repressive activities against the national minorities in Tapaz perpetrated since the time of the US-Marcos regime. As before, such human rights abuses reaped ever bigger people's protests and swelled the ranks of the people's army.

Aside from targetting the destruction of revolutionary mass organizations, the AFP also aimed to pursue and crush NPA units. They launched combat operations. There were times when more than two battalion-size operations were launched in a span of one month.

Nonetheless, the NPA was never involved in any decisive encounter because the people ensured the safety of their army and the mass organizations.

The military was thus forced to concoct firefights. For instance, on November 27, 2002 in Santa Carmen, Dumalag, Capiz, a soldier shot and killed a fellow soldier and seriously wounded another during a combat clearing operation by the 12th IB. The TFP boasted that the incident constituted an encounter with the NPA and even bestowed honors on the soldier they had killed.

Recently, the NPA was able to wipe out no less than the SOT command. The victorious tactical offensive highlighted the failure of the military's campaign.

The NPA will thwart all counterrevolutionary campaigns of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime. With the masses' support, it continues to gain strength and consolidate, along with the revolutionary mass organizations of national minorities set up to defend their ancestral lands. AB

8

Valiant Red commanders

Ka Bob and Ka Berto—heroes of the national minorities and the Filipino people

In a salute to all Red commanders and fighters of the New People's Army, Ang Bayan publishes the following tributes to two martyred commanders who gave their all to serve the revolution and the people. Aside from their exemplary records of struggle, Ismaelito "Ka Bob" Giganto and Ado "Ka Berto" are brilliant examples of the decisiveness and success of national minorities to actively participate in national revolutionary change.

Ka Bob died while fighting enemy troops in Tapaz, Capiz on February 24. Ka Berto died in January while performing revolutionary tasks.

Ka Bob (Baesd on a tribute by the CPP Regional Committee in Panay)

Ka Bob was a Tumanduk, a national minority group concentrated in the central part of Panay.

Ka Bob's family was among those displaced when Tapaz and Jamindan in Capiz were used as sites for military exercises in 1962. Their lands in Tapaz were also grabbed by big landlords and converted to pasturelands.

Ka Bob's family was one of the most enthusiastic in the struggle when the NPA came to their area and organized the Tumanduk tribe in 1972. With his father Mal-am Benig, a respected Tumanduk leader, their family convinced other village leaders to support the NPA. They waged a successful mass campaign against the tumado, a form of land rent implemented by the Philippine Army. Before joining the NPA, Ka Bob was an activist struggling for genuine land reform against big landlords.

It was 1984 when Ka Bob joined the NPA. He participated in many victorious military actions. He effectively utilized his familiarity with the terrain, his close relations with the people and his grasp of Tumanduk culture and history.

Despite his having joined the people's army during the 1980s, a time when deviations were prevalent, he remained firm in his revolutionary stand. After a number of years, he was appointed Red commander of the main guerrilla unit operating in Tapaz,

American soldiers in Central Panay

The military has been focusing on Central Panay not only because the revolutionary movement has made advances in this area. Central Panay is likewise one of the possible places where American troops may be deployed under the framework of deepening and expanding US armed intervention in the country.

On March 5, 2003, a contingent of American soldiers arrived from Sulu allegedly to provide medical training to Filipino soldiers. Noticeably, there was not a single doctor with the contingent.

Central Panay is composed of 24 barrios in the towns of Tapaz and Jamindan, and comprises 12% of the territory of Capiz. It is where the 33,310-hectare ancestral lands of the Tumanduk tribe is located, and which the AFP has long been grabbing for use as a site for war games.

Also located in the area is Camp Macario Peralta, which aside from being the 3rd ID's headquarters, has become one of the biggest training grounds ever since Sangley Point in Cavite was converted to civilian use. It is here where soldiers conduct various training exercises and where weapons and bombs are tested.

Since 1994, the 3rd ID has been attempting to eject residents, calling them squatters. In December 1995, four persons, including two children, were wounded when a bomb that was being tested fell short of its target and hit a group of houses. In October 1994, the Balikatan series held an extension training exercise in the area joined by about 250 American soldiers with various kinds of warplanes and bombs.

AB

Jamindan and Calinog in Capiz. Under his leadership, his unit successfully overcame the fierceness of the all-out war and gradual constriction scheme launched by the US-Ramos regime by maintaining good relations with the masses.

Ka Bob was also a fine Party cadre. He was one of the first minorities in Panay who became members of the Party Regional Committee. He indefatigably explained to the Tumanduk tribespeople in the locality as well as the people's army, the importance of Marxist-Leninist principles and the comprehensive advance of the revolution. He was a great help in recovering areas formerly covered by the NPA.

Ka Bob also played a major role in mediating conflicts among warring clans and villages. He patiently taught others how to set up mass organizations, about the democratization of leadership as well as the exercise of collective leadership in a way that would not trample on the Tumanduk system of justice and the tribe's traditional leaders.

Ka Bob reflected the higher level of struggle reached by the Tumanduk tribe. He was not only a courageous Tumanduk fighter or a wise and respected leader of his tribe. He was a genuine proletarian revolutionary leader.

Ka Berto (Excerpted from a tribute on February 9 by his unit's higher organ)

Ado was Ka Berto's real name. Like many others from the Aggay tribe (a minority group in the Sierra Madre side of Northern Luzon), he had no surname.

He came in contact with and joined the people's army in Isabela, when the NPA had just been formed, more than 30 years ago. He was one of the first minorities to have had links with the NPA and he was likewise one of the NPA commanders and fighters—minority or otherwise—who served the people's army the longest.

In the more than 30 years before his death, the Party and the revolutionary movement were his sole family, his only life. His wife died during a big and sensitive mission, when they had but served the people's army for a brief period. His only child also died as a member of the movement. He was able to visit his brother only recently after many years.

Comrade Mao Zedong once said, "It does not matter if a hero is buried where he dies. What is important is that he lived and died in true service to the revolution and the people."

Even before he joined the people's army, Comrade Berto was looked up to by the people living in a wide area of the Sierra Madre. His tribe was renowned for its bravery; but more important, Comrade Berto was an exceptionally skilled hunter, and an expert when it came to the jungle. He had a remarkable native intelligence and was outstanding in his capacity to understand, his kindness and his ability to relate to others (minorities and non-minorities alike).

Comrade Berto's first involvement in the people's army was with an armed propaganda unit and a guerrilla unit. For the past 20 years, he was a member of a support unit. He joined many victorious and fierce battles. As the commander of his unit, he led it in confronting and resisting many large enemy campaigns and operations. His skills as an excellent sniper have been proven in battle. He was also known as a good NPA trainor.

In his unit, Comrade Berto also usually pacified comrades who were impatient, impulsive or were having disagreements. During times of stress and difficulty, he usually lightened things up with his jokes, pleasant commentaries and funny stories.

Because he had full confidence in his own abilities and was unstinting in his relations with comrades in the Party and the people's army, Comrade Berto never had problems while interacting with comrades and the masses who were non-minorities. He treated them all equally, no matter what their skin color or religion. With humor, he liked recounting his experience with a well-to-do peasant who was at a loss on how to deal with him upon being told that he, the Aeta, was the commander of the NPA unit.

Like many other martyrs of the revolution, Comrade Berto was buried in the forest where he died, far from the place of his birth. Comrade Mao Zedong once said, "It does not matter if a hero is buried where he dies. What is important is that he lived and died in true service to the revolution and the people." Thus was Comrade Berto, a valiant hero of the people and the Philipppine revolution. AB

NPA and MILF to free prisoners

THE NPA and MILF are set to free their prisoners of war as a demonstration of their sincere aspirations for peace. The decision was announced in a dialogue on March 15 joined by MILF Vice Chairman for Military Affairs Al Haj Murad, CPP Mindanao Commission member Ka Allan Juanito, NDF-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos and 15 Catholic bishops, Muslim ulamas, sectoral leaders and others.

The MILF captured seven government troops in Barangay Tingin-Tinginin, Balo-i, Lanao del Norte on March 6. Their release documents are already being processed. Meanwhile, the only requirement remaining for the release of the CPP's prisoners is confirmation from the Party leadership.

Human rights violations in Central Mindanao worsening

THE HUMAN rights situation in Central Mindanao is worsening. There are up to 41,000 evacuees in Pikit, North Cotabato. Sixteen (14 of them children) have died of measles in cramped evacuation centers since clashes resumed between the AFP and MILF.

Karapatan, the Moro-Christian Peoples Alliance (MCPA) and Bayan Muna discovered after a fact-finding mission conducted from February 28 to March 4 that at least 38,808 persons (or 60% of Pikit's population) have lost their homes.

Five civilians have been listed as victims of extrajudicial killing (two of them children from Datu Piang, Maguindanao); and six were illegally arrested in Barangay Kidama. One-hundred sixty-one houses were burned down by elements of the 40th IB: 84 in North Cotabato and 77 in Sharif Aguak, Maguindanao. All in all, there have been 35 documented cases of forced evacuation where 12 died; four bombing cases; 10 cases of extrajudicial killing; and 44 cases of pillaging. The destruction of religious structures is likewise widespread.

The Diocese of Kidapawan City also said that even before the latest evacuation, 15,445 families or 62,195 individuals were already cramped into 100 evacuation centers. On March 1, some evacuees tried to return to Sitio Galingayon, Barangay Maksabual in Pikit, but soldiers from the 40th IB set fire to 27 of their houses on March 3.

As a result of this pitiful state of affairs, Karapatan, MCPA, Bayan Muna and health associations have urged Congress to investigate these incidents. The concerned organizations will likewise launch a worldwide campaign to urge Macapagal-Arroyo and Sec. Angelo Reyes of the Department of National Defense to put an immediate stop to military operations in Central Mindanao.

Campaign to defend Sison broadens

THE CAMPAIGN to drop the NPA and Comrade Jose Ma. Sison from the "terrorist" list continues to gain broad support overseas. There is also expanding support for defending Sison's rights as a political refugee.

According to Ruth de Leon of Committee Defend, protest actions continue in various parts of the world to advance Sison's rights. They include demonstrations, pickets, letter and petition barrages, signature campaigns, cultural presentations, fora and lobbying at the European Parliament and US government. As of the present, up to 50,000 persons have signed a declaration of support for Sison to be presented before the European Commission on April 15.

Meanwhile, Sison has gained a new volunteer lawyer in the person of Ramsey Clark, former US Attorney General during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration. Clark founded the International Action Center, which is at the core of the huge mobilizations against the US war on Iraq.

Women oppose US military intervention

THOUSANDS of women took a stand and poured out into the streets on March 8, International Working Women's Day, to tell both George Bush and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of their intense anger and loathing at US imperialism and the puppet republic's violation of national sovereignty. Led by Gabriela, the women called for Macapagal-Arroyo's immediate ouster.

Not only will women become the direct victims of war, they said. US military intervention will likewise worsen sex trafficking and the forcible recruitment of women into the flesh trade. When Balikatan 02-1 was launched last year, there were reports of widespread recruitment of young women (age 13-18) in the urban centers of Davao. The women were bound for Zamboanga where the American troops were based.

Aside from the 3,000 women and children who marched towards Mendiola Bridge in Manila, more than 1,000 members of the Bicol Concerned Women for Nationalism (Bicolana) rallied in front of the 19th IB's camp in Pilar, Sorsogon.

In Borongan, Eastern Samar, 2,000 Catholic nuns and priests, seminarians, other religious sectors, peasants and tricycle drivers marched in the rain. Simultaneous with celebrating women's day, they strongly opposed the impending US war on Iraq.

In Bacolod City, 1,500 women workers joined a noise barrage and a march by the Alliance of Youth Against War (AYAW).

Mass actions were also conducted in Baguio City by Innabuyog-Gabriela, Dinteg Alternative Law Center and the Cordillera Peoples Alliance.

Eulogies for Stalin continue

THOUSANDS of people visited the grave of Josef Stalin, communist leader of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) on his 50th death anniversary on March 5. Bringing flags of the former USSR, they offered red flowers for a great leader and father of the nation. Most of those who came were veterans of the Second World War and soldiers who defended the USSR against occupation by the fascist Hitler.

Many Russians and other citizens of the former USSR, especially the elderly, look up to Stalin as a good and humane leader. Under his leadership, the USSR blossomed as a powerful socialist nation.

Stalin succeeded Vladimir Lenin as secretary general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) upon the latter's death in 1924. Prior to this, he served as editor of the CPSU's official newspaper Pravda. From 1928 to 1941, he implemented a series of five-year plans that caused the growth and development of industry and agriculture in the USSR.

TESDA spreading prostitution

THE ROLE of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in the proliferation of prostitution was bared in an exposé this March. TESDA is the government agency tasked with approving the Artist's Record Book (ARB) which supposedly certifies that overseas performing artist applicants are skilled in performing arts such as dancing and singing. Most of those who would like to acquire ARBs are applicants for entertainer jobs in Japan. Almost all of them end up as prostitutes once they reach Japan.

According to the Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) which exposed this anomaly, applicants without artistic skills pay up to P45,000 just to be able to obtain ARBs. DAWN said that the government serves as a pimp due to this practice.

TESDA Director General Dante Liban's role in this anomaly was likewise exposed. Liban himself bragged that he signed 55,000 ARBs in his first eight months in office. Many of these ARBs, said DAWN, were pre-signed and sold for huge amounts to desperate applicants.

Liban was forced to resign on March 14 due to intense criticism.